

Mrs. Erlynne. [*Shrugging her shoulders*] Don't uTse
ugly words,
Windermere. They are vulgar. I saw my
chance, it is
true, and took it.

Lord Windermere. Yes, you took it—and spoiled
it all last
night by being found out.

Mrs. Erlynne. [*With a strange smile*] You are
quite right, I
spoiled it all last night.

Lord Windermere. And as for your blunder in
taking my wife's
fan from here and then leaving it about in
Darlington's rooms,
it is unpardonable. I can't bear the sight of it
now. I shall
never let my wife use it again. The thing is
soiled for me.
You should have kept it and not brought it
back.

Mrs. Erlynne. I think I *shall* keep it. [*Goes up*] It's
extremely
pretty. [*Takes up fan*] I shall ask Margaret
to give it
to me.

Lord Windermere. I hope my wife will give it you.

Mrs. Erlynne. Oh, I'm sure she will have no
objection.

Lord Windermere. I wish that at the same time
she would give
you a miniature she kisses every night before
she prays—
It's the miniature of a dark innocent-looking
girl with
beautiful dark hair.

Mrs. Erlynne. Ah, yes, I remember. How long ago
that seems!
[*Goes to sofa and sits down*] It was done before I
was married.
Dark hair and an innocent expression were the
fashion then,
Windermere 1 [A
pause.

Lord Windermere. What do you mean by coming
here this
morning? What is your object? [*Crossing L C
and sitting.*

Mrs. Erlynne. [*With a note of irony in her voice*] To
bid good-
bye to my dear daughter, of course. [*Lord
Windermere bites
his under lip in anger. Mrs. Erlynne looks at
him, and her
voice and manner become serious. In her accents
as she talks
there is a note of deep tragedy. For a moment she
reveals
herself*] Oh, don't imagine I am going to have a
pathetic
scene with her, weep on her neck and tell her
who I am,
and all that kind of thing. I have no ambition
to play the
part of a mother. Only once in my life have I
known a
mother's feelings. That was last night. They
were terrible
—they made me suffer—they made me suffer too
much. For
twenty years, as you say, I have lived childless,—
I want to
live childless still. [*Hiding her feelings with a
trivial laugh*]
Besides, my dear Windermere, how on earth
could I pose as
a mother with a grown-up daughter? Margaret
is twenty-
one, and I have never admitted that I am more
than twenty-